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Opportunity to breathe

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OPPORTUNITY TO BREATHE

by

Christopher Courtney Cruz Rangel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts
degree in Theatre Arts in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2015

Thesis Supervisor: Professor John C. Cameron

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Graduate College
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Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Christopher Courtney Cruz Rangel

has been approved by the Examining Committee for
the thesis requirement for the Master of Fine Arts degree
in Theatre Arts at the May 2015 graduation.

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Communication, involves the skill and craftsmanship of an aspiring artist to investigate the possibilities within. Interaction and communion with the world is amplified by practice of breathing in, during multiple circumstances. Acting is reacting to the world and the multiple microcosms in it. But why is this important, why is this necessary, why is there a need to act, to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances? This University is a place that has given me the opportunity to investigate these curiosities. Not everyone has the opportunity to commit to the investigation of what it means to breathe in the atmosphere in a specific context and to respond with impulse in forms of both sound and movement.

This process is investigating what it means to find truth in oneself in response to the space, time, and people. The investigating is of what it means to be, rather than to manipulate a world that caters to the ego, in truth the ego must dissipate. I came here with ideas and determinations, but all of this anticipatory preparation is what I had to let go of in pursuance of truth and the development of a craft. I used to believe my time here was an end point that would lead me to a goal.

It is not; it is an introduction to the rest of my life. I am a student now and forever. I encourage the reader to take one thing, consider what it means to be a life long learner.

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Introduction:

Some people need to try more and some people need to try less. This doesn't mean they should do nothing, but that they should try simply to do less. In the doing of too much there are moments that can get lost, information can get lost; in true doing the moments will reach full potential. Yet everything means something and everything is useful. In order to be conscious of the opportunities one must awaken, one must listen. I need to listen; in listening so much is being done. It takes patience to listen to the world. Some people are so caught up with their needs that they forget to be patient and observe the possibilities in giving over to something different.

Dr. Cameron once said, "In the not doing, you are in fact doing." This is a complex yet simple thought. The development of consciousness or awareness can be used in acting. This perspective shift is important to change effort, by lessening it. This allows the observer to bare witness to so many things that are still being done in the space around them. I am willing to admit that I don't know much of anything when it comes to my process. There are things that I've come to believe and things that I've come to discern as rudimentary in acting practice, though imperative in the journey of life. I have developed an appreciation for many things, the written word, languages, action, choices, breath, the unknown possibilities, space, emotions, anatomy of the body and it's mechanics, teaching others how to act, change, people, food, vices, impulses and the willingness to continue this journey.

I don't necessarily mean journey in a sense of "This acting journey" but more in a sense of this life journey. I don't know where I will go and sometimes I don't know what I will do. This is something that I would never have let happen in the past because my tendency would be to drive to the end point of any dramatic situation. I'm here, and that's enough for once in my life. It is enough to simply be somewhere and not focus on where to go. In essence you are always going somewhere, either to your death or to the future. You needn't worry where because you have little control. All you need to worry about is the present. It is good to plan and hope but living in the present and reacting to the present is ultimately the only way you will get there. Wherever it is your going.

Process, what is a process? Is it the multiple actions in a period of time? Is it how you operate and what motivates your operation? Is process how you go about fulfilling your desires? Is it your interpretations? Is it how you function in an environment? Is it the reoccurring theme in your life patterns? Just some things to think about, more for me, because I'm changing every chance I get and so is the process. This document is a recap to what has significantly affected me in my time here. Will I envelop all of this information into unconscious competence? Maybe for a while or maybe not, like I said I don't really know. If anything I will say that one of the most important parts of my process is remembering to breathe and remember that breathing feels good.

Section 1: Relationship to self

My process of awareness requires the self-investigation and willingness to listen to observations made by those around me. This was difficult, in the beginning because I had to become aware of what people saw me do in an objective manner. It took me along time remember that it is all just information. There was a time when everything I did was motivated by the urge to succeed in completing tasks that would result in hypothetical goals. Product oriented driving was the habit to which I would attempt to reach goals and objectives. Everything I did was in order to get to the next step. This is simple but not what one needs to expand the artistic landscape of living in the moment. My needs were motivated by general ideas that were not grounded in the reality of what I was experiencing. There is so much that is going on in the present, but the ego, can dismiss all of these opportunities if one does not make the choice to appreciate the present and surrender to it. I had to listen more to everything.

I didn't know myself very well; I had thoughts that were developed by my ego and my experiences. My previous life was always about getting somewhere rather than existing where I was. In this pattern I developed anxiety, tension and became locked up as well as defensive. All this was because of fear.

I do not expect to know myself after my time here, but I am interested in the awareness and curiosity of myself as I continue my journey. This is something that my students remind me of as, I tell them "You must always ask the question why." You must not dismiss what is and what could be while remaining as attentive as possible to listening to what the world is giving you. "By giving you" I am referring to everything

you or I may be experiencing in this life. Every moment is information. I didn't recognize the potential of this observation because I lacked focus in my listening. My process was oriented on goals, this is not bad but it made me not very versatile in my acting.

I have a tendency to think while acting, this can be a result of much things insecurity, anxieties or lack of preparation. Thoughts are not useful in my process because no one can see them. I received many notes during my 1st year about getting out of my head and the need to listen to my partner. Also about driving because there was no need to drive forward or push to the biggest moment in the scene. As time passed I gained awareness that all moments are equally important and develop the orchestral composition of a play just as notes do to a piece of music. My mind was gridlocked and densely compacted with tight thinking patterns. What is different now is the ability to not get stuck in one way of thinking or becoming locked on attitude towards anything. Which is beautiful, because nothing and everything have the potential to mean so many things, so many new variants, so many colors, tones and notes. This is huge, because in my work all things need to have weight just as the words and gestures do. Everything has become more important because of hyperawareness. Something Dr. Cameron referred to in period styles class was that hyperawareness could make moments full.

Hyperawareness and developing sensitivity to stimuli is an important aspect of my process. The sensitivity to everything makes the opportunity to play everything more prominent. By play, I mean use. For instance if something goes wrong or not according to plan, an opportunity to us the problem becomes apparent if one is aware to the new information presented by the problem or obstacle. One of my idiosyncrasies is to assert

control over situations or premeditate the outcome of something that hasn't had the opportunity to exist. Really, it's more about listening to the opportunities rather than trying to push your agenda. Now the agenda can seem non-apparent to the actor. It wasn't apparent to me for the longest time, but an agenda is usually always present if the actor is not focused on what is being given to him. Thus the sensitivity or hyperawareness can be incredibly useful, my way to this is by calming the breath and listening.

I am one of the people that are grouped in the try less crowd. Recounting one of my first times working with Dr. Cameron and him telling me "It's more about the basics for you Chris, its about getting back to the truth and not pushing what you think needs to happen." He later told me that I would have to change my way of thinking and allow myself to settle in the present. This was different from previous practice, which was to push and "bulldoze over the moments." Most of my first year was about "softening the approach" and surrendering to the space, my partner and even the text. My journey became about giving over to the world and playing in it.

If you do the work, in a relaxed manner it will be available in a relaxed state. If you do the work in a forceful manner it will be available in a forceful state. This is a practical application of what I needed to adhere to in my work. You cannot force technical vocal and physical work to enter your conscious awareness, you must commit to the work in a relaxed state and eventually it will permeate into your unconscious competence, as Ann-Marie Nest so put it.

I was skeptical in the beginning, but over the years I now believe in the soft approach to working the acting craft, I see no need to memorize lines quickly the night

before a presentation or labor my breathing to melt away tension (see section on relationship to breath.)

Critical analysis, in terms of my process in regards to the ongoing process means to question why one does the things one does. I listen to the criticism and observations made by those observing the things I do, even when I really do not want to. The conscious questioning of habits that people claim I have are useful in helping me make adjustments because they are simply telling me what they see and this is important. I find an objective perspective though reminder that multiple perspectives exist. Objective simple information is always going to contribute to the evolution of my training. It is difficult at first to listen to what people say, because the information is objective, not personal, it is not factual but in some ways very truthful.

People have a tendency to allow their egos, to get in the way of what is “Real” and create delusions. Pipe dreams and narcissisms can develop in the exploratory process of ones acting. Confidence and validation can get mixed up with arrogance and images of grandeur.

I have this memory with Dr. Cameron. I felt the need to discuss why I had not been cast for a season and went to speak with him. I was upset about not being cast, but he helped me understand that the reason I was so upset was because my ego had gotten in my way. I distinctly remember Dr. Cameron saying to me “Stop telling us how good you are and do the work, do the work. You keep telling us how great you are and we aren’t seeing it, so you must continue to do the work.” I was crying in his office because my ego had been built to fight and believe that false confidence was enough. This is where my

process began, I had to breathe and accept that what this man was telling me was true. He told me that I needed to change my approach, which translated to changing my way of thinking. He encouraged me to meditate and go to yoga. He also told me that I had a weak imagination. I needed his perspective to help me change mine and to expand myself into a different direction of living.

I was overwhelmed by all this new information and sought the opinions of healthcare professional because I took Dr. Cameron literally. After three opinions I learned that a humble rebuild was necessary for me continue in this program. The professionals agreed with Dr. Cameron's advice on meditation and yoga.

Again, some people need to do and some need to do less. Trying with much effort is an indicator of someone who is unprepared; this can be opened up to many things. Insecurity, this is the cause of not breathing and what needs to be addressed. Interestingly enough by breathing more, and this doesn't require labored or forced breath, insecurities are less magnified because the focus is on the breath.

Section 2: Relationship to breath

The breath is the key in invigorating the body with life source. The capacities to do all physical tasks are based in the breath; I would have never considered the true importance of breath before coming to this place. I would have remained ignorant to the power within and the necessity of the breath in catalyzing physical release.

To do anything physically active in unison with imagination requires full inspiration and expiration. The body is at its most capable in a state of full ventilation, thus in this state expansion and presence are activated because the body is working with the breath, giving over to the breath not constraining. The breath is the vehicle to which one can access the potential connection to space, their partner and the audience. Everything matters in the space and what connects you to everything is breath.

It is important to breathe in the space, as Matteo Destro would say “Spread you in the space”, my interpretation of this is that breathing into the space and exchanging breath with it is taking in the space. With the minutia of this task in mind actions made in a space are full rather than pedestrian. With full body breath the corpse is activated with breath in the process of ventilation hence making the actor more present.

Conscious thought towards my breath was not of any consideration before my time here. I was unconsciously unaware of my relationship to breath and dismissed it. This left me tight, contained and restricted to minimal forms of expression in response to my partners and all the moments available to play.

This also resulted to habits of forcing and pushing in my acting. My process requires constant reminder that it is all about the breath to a certain extent. That it is relevant, in actuality breath is the foundation.

This isn't it though, along with constant reminder of the need to breathe more in my everyday activity. For example, during any movement such as standing or walking even supporting and aligned spine in a seated position the breath must be fully expanded in effort to sustain these positions without inducing tension within the musculature.

Breathing itself is a process of slowing down; the breathing is the allowing of the tension to melt with the breath, the heat, the steam, and the blood cells. For oxygenated cells to lubricate body into a limber state, limber so it is responsive and receptive to the minutia of the smallest vibrations. The limber body is more flexible in dealing with the chaos of many actions, but the actions can only be dealt with consecutively one after another. Dr. Cameron states that a person can only commit to one thing at a time.

I tend to get caught up in trying to deal with many things rather than one thing at a time. I get lost in a grander ideal instead of dealing with what is right in front of me. My process is about simplification; it's about relying on the simpler things and recognizing that those are what should yield the larger concern. The bigger things are really out of my control. Interestingly enough a lot of the simplification lies in the ability to breathe, but surrendering to the breath is a task that still is not mastered nor will be. I remind myself that everything is a process including breathing.

Surrender, this is key in letting go of the mental chains that can stifle free expression, economical movement and the ability to play. Many things cloud the mind when breath is not fully utilized. I need to constantly reiterate the importance of breathing so I ask myself a question. How can my relationship to breath serve me in playing what is available? This question I ask myself during my day-to-day experiences. It helps me appreciate the possibilities of what can happen in this life and the lives of my characters. This question leads to hyper awareness of the breathing process.

The breathing process itself is something to meditate on, sometimes I can get so imbedded in the cobwebs of my brain that by simply focusing on breathing and the muscles involved I can pull myself out of my mind and be more aware of what is going on with me physically by use of breath. It has become a gauging apparatus.

There have been times when I lay and imagine full body breath happen. I imagine the breathing process taking over every part of my body and it causing me to feel more. This is very useful because it makes me more sensitive to what is around me, it aids my listening and my ability to respond to even the subtlest nuances. I do this continuously during the rehearsal process and in my spare time. I let it go during performance, especially when I am actually on stage. Sometimes if need be I will focus on my breath right before I step onstage.

It is important to ask question the ability to be curious and question how is breath helping or hindering the body. There is so much to consider if the breath is not being used with full body breathing. Issues such as muscular blocks of tension can occur or channels of breath in vessels of the body may be constricted which will lead to tight

tendons, fascia, and musculature. All aspects of my body are relevant in requiring the intake of full body breath. Only in a state of openness and awareness can the breath become the vehicle for creating what appears to be madness, insanity or anything in the realm of theatrical possibility, but not breathing doesn't allow you to do as much. It reduces your movement, is constrains the power. It kills the character and eventually the actor.

Not breathing keeps you from experiencing, listening and reacting. Athletes breathe in order to react to the environment. I believe the use of imagination can facilitate the release of muscle tension and relax my body so that movement isn't restrictive. Not just in a physical sense but also in a meta-physical sense. I if imagine pools of blood infused with oxygen that activate blood cells one by one; this can also help me release physically. There is so much that takes part in the process of working with the breath, blood cells, tissue, organ tissue and basic minerals that compose the rest of the body. All of these aspects of the body are working chemically, biologically, physiologically and physically in response to one another. They are reacting with impulses of energy, which will translate, to efficient movement and then to physical gesture. The process of movement needs the breath to sustain actions and to increase activation of the actor. I have gained insight and perspective to these specifics of the breathing process as part of my realization of how breath helps me act. This is purely regarding the internal use of breath so that I can release into the space, this begins to tap into the next step, which is to breathe in the space.

“Breathing in the space,” what does that mean? I have adopted the assertion that it simply means walking into a space seeing all of it and breathing what is seen. There is more to this that happens. Many things that involve energy, attention, focus and imagination regard the process attached to the breath. I am referring to the minutia of breathing, and using it to your advantage as breathe in a space. The spaces is where I play, where reverberations of my sound waves will bounce so I must breathe as much as possible and fill it energetically with my intention. My intention is to take everything about it in, the light, the echoes and the vibrations, and use it.

Your intention, what you intend, requires the power of breath, your breath is your power. There is a ratio of how much breath is needed to suit a particular intention. So I work to establish a deeper connection to my breath in order to use my body vocally and with movement as I play. The breath harnesses the actor to tapping the full potential of expression suited for the action, in reaction to the partners, the play, the interplay between the audience and myself because I cannot ignore them. You must use everything and let the breath guide you, the more I do this the less I lie to myself and play shape, mood or energy.

Much more consideration for the breath has occurred during my time here. I conclude that before my time here breath was an unconscious act. It was not considered; I was unaware of the how the breath could help me. How it could treat the inter caverns of my body, filling me up with bubbles upon bubbles of oxygen permeating the body and helping it activate the body so that it can be in communion with the atmosphere. I

sometimes imagine myself breathing under water in pursuance of moving as fluid moving through space and time.

Fluidity of breath facilitates spontaneous responses to the actors' immediate surroundings. I remind myself to think less breathe more, feel more and listen more. This motto has been something that resonates in my mind to reach a state relaxed consciousness. It helps me get out of my mental landscape and into the world outside of myself. Breath is necessary for the body to respond to external stimuli. If you breathe in the space and your partner, you will become more aware of what is in the space and what your partner is giving you. I am creating a dialogue with the use of my breath so that I become less intellectual and theoretical about what is happening. I have a tendency to think myself into metaphor and this helps me ground into the actual circumstance.

Breathing cannot be laborious, if breath is forced reactions are forced. Imposed tension affects the result of the journey from impulse to action. What is natural breathing? Free and open breath, once a portal or the body opens and the air rushes into the body like a flood of fluid like energy, but breath is the term. I must constantly remind myself of this action, in my breathing and during my process of working on a play. The breath is what gives me the ability to play actions limberly in response to the partners on stage and environment created as the production evolves. Conscious awareness is the constant goal of reaching a relaxed present state in my work. I have to focus on this because I am tense person and will attempt to use tension as power; this is why most of my worked is pushed.

During *Water By The Spoonful* I would wake up in the middle of the night locked up. My entire body was stiff and clinging on to itself, arms gripping across my chest to each other, shoulder to shoulder. My legs would straighten out as if my knees were locked. What was interesting about this was that at the time I was doing everything I could to relieve tension. I attended hot yoga classes, meditated, lay on a dowel and committed to floor work that incorporated tremors in yogic positions. The point is even during that period tension was fighting to stay within my body. All the work in the world will not be as helpful if the breath is not vibrant in the highest capacity within the body. It is the vehicle of human interaction. Now I find time to lay on a dowel and use my imagination to allow an exploration with imagination to deepen the relationship with my sub-conscious. This helps me use my breath consciously to relieve tension in my body. Sometimes I will hum or make open sounds, usually elongated vowels. Pain will most likely arise so breath and sound are expressed to allow the energy to leave the body. The pain is located in particular areas of the body; there are areas that have been the same and some that migrate when tension is released in one area. The pain is not necessarily caused from the breathing but some the stretching and release of certain muscles.

My perspective on breath before my time here was not aware of the potential it can bring to a character during a show. I am finding the breath to be the most immediate tool in grounding, presence, connecting to my body, my partner, performance space and props/objects. It is one of the most important aspects of my work that I can actually have some control in using towards my craft. Most of this imagery is to revalidate my relationship with breath. In pursuit of eventually developing the unconscious competence of breathing.

Section 3: Relationship to movement

Movement is everything from gesture to sound. My time here has been a process of developing the competence to understand the body's relationship to movement. My movement can only begin to be crafted after the release of my body has taken place and my release is tied to my breath. I am grounded in the belief that breath is primary and movement is secondary what is constant is the development of the connection between the two. Most of my work is about tying my movement to my breath, instead of muscling movement. Muscling movement causes tension to lock up the body, and movement that is done with breath is economical and relaxed. I feel I know this, but doing this requires me to have a new approach to my physical work. I cannot use my muscles to fill a form because the form will only be a shape. The shape of something is not living but if the breath is used to promote movement the form is living.

Matteo Destro once said "Love is constant everything else is movement." The reason this is important is in relation to my fifth semester here. During my fifth semester many things came together from my previous classes and from yoga. It was the culmination of many things involved with the work of presence and the knowledge of vibrational information in the environment and allowing it release my affect. This tied into the coursework of Psychophysical acting with Eric Forsythe; Mask and Clown with Paul Kalina. And the Lecoq work with Matteo Destro and Paola Coletto as well. All of these techniques now are in me, but I have the choice to what is necessary for a particular character, which will come out of what I believe to be helpful to my characters. I think all of the work I've done here is connected and complimentary, it can be applied to every performance and scene dependent on what the character needs and the moment calls for.

The actions of the character are in reference to the text as they are deduced from the script. The script is the basis of what will help me determine what style I should seek in my characters physicality. What I liked most about Coco, was that he was new. He was birthed in the rehearsal process and the playwright let me be part of that. Sometimes the most useful approach for me is to let anything be fair game and not limit myself to what I think is appropriate to the text. Basically not letting styles rule me. I had the opportunity to play with everything and then try to tie it into a style. Though sometimes just a particular style can help me release into the character. The beautiful thing about all of this is that there are many options to choose from in playing a character. The styles inform the movement and the movement informs the imagination and the imagination creates the character.

Everything has style in performance either in a singular sense or as a composite of multiple styles that fuse the forms in which the play will live in. This determines what the characters are allowed to do in the world of the play. I am aware that attitude is slowly melting away and the compartmentalization of my physicality is diminishing with every opportunity to play a new character. All the technique is really available for use, what really matters is the ability to remain limber enough to tap into so many physical options and having the capacity to move a certain way in response to what a partner is sending you consciously and with choice.

During a show I like to attend a yoga class three times a week, at the least. If I can attend more I will. In accordance to those three classes I will commit to some cardio exercise as well to maintain endurance for the performance. Vocal work in my process is

considered movement so it will be discussed in the “Relationship to Voice” section of this document. I stretch everyday, the stretches consist of yogic stretches and typical warm up stretches, usually meant to warm my body so that I can feel released and relaxed. The wooden dowel is a staple of my process because it helps me connect to my body with ease and specific focus on particular muscle groups that are holding tension.

I work to lose inhibitions with my physical responses in order to dismiss anticipation. Of course during the rehearsal process I will try things based out of direction, the script and most importantly response. The key for me is to not question myself too much but allow a response to arise out of the environment. The work to loosen the body is meant to allow play to happen frequently.

Clown, mask, and connecting the physical, psychological, and emotional relationships to work in a holistic fashion are what create the response and gestures of characters. One thing to always remain conscious of is that they are all tools, and every instance will require either an old tool to be utilized or an amalgam of multiple tools to be used. The key to manifesting physical gestures from a theoretical standpoint to reality is tied to the breath.

The breath is what strengthens all aspects of what is available in my work. The love of the work and the game is what drives me to play; to reach this state of thoughtless reactive presence is my goal in playing the characters I work on. There are clichés, motifs and general strokes at first during my rehearsal process, but now I believe its better to make a mess at first then clean and sharpen the image as the character slowly develops

into a portrait. An old problem of my work was trying desperately to play the portrait as soon as possible, without allowing the most colors to splat against the canvas.

Simplicity in movement is very important because movement itself is a process that requires many steps that are both conscious and unconscious. Old tendencies of mine that still plague me are rushing speech and movement. With this the character appears to be a wash, a mixture, and the saturation of singular colors are not seen but muddled in quick exposure. The colors need to be specifically exposed so that the story has this character to support it. The only way I can describe it is by not using the breath economically and allowing anxiety to master the movement instead of breathing the movement and seeking the opportunity to play in it.

The trust that all the physical work will be there during the performance and letting it go right before you hit the stage is important in releasing to the performance. I try to remain secure in that my body will remember everything I did prior, it will have associations that inform my steps and will do what I need it to do. The body will do what it needs to do without my thoughts but out of what is happening on the stage. Which is amazing, but in order for that to truly happen I must give over to everything I've done physically and give over to what is possible.

There are two shows that required some physically specific attention. The first was *Pocket Full of Sand*, by Emily Dendiger and the other was the *Iowa Partnership in the Arts: Crescendo*, By Paola Coletto and Matteo Destro. Both shows were new works, both required new spines. The spines will help determine what the character needs, because of its dimension in space and its relation to space. How it moves and what it

responds most to is directly connected to the form or the spinal alignment and its' proportioning of the three parts of the body. Before any of this work is explored in rehearsal there must be constant attention neutralizing habits of the spinal alignment that may diminish the presence available for play. The work in yoga is done outside of class and is meant to invite more breath into the body to alleviate tension and allow the channels of the body to expel appropriate amounts of energy in an economical way. Yoga has complimented the physical work that I have done here with Paul Kalina and Eric Forsythe.

I am a physically tense person; so much of my work is about going in the opposite direction, meaning I do not need to tense in order to complete tasks. My process is about surrendering to breath and allowing movement to be pulled out of me, this is directly connected to my listening. Whenever I have time during a rehearsal process I use guided meditation via web or I will lie on the dowel and hum for periods of time ranging from twenty to sixty minutes. There have been times that I have meditated on the dowel and fallen asleep. There was a period during the summer between my first and second year when I would attempt to sleep on my dowel for long periods of time. I discontinued those efforts because in essence what I was doing was too extreme and part of habits that I needed to shed away as part of my journey. It's more about balancing the energy of the body and allowing it to respond to the environment for my process. I tend to navigate the extremes of energy in my acting, with either force when unnecessary or weak almost absent energy when necessary.

Yoga is part of my process; it is complimented by the movement work Kalina focuses on. He has given us movement that helps the release tension and encourages movement with breath, which is the goal for economical movement. Economical movement is key, in telling the clear bits of the story. Along with this is consideration of the style and what language of gesture formulates its' structure, which will require variants of energy that can only be economically justified with the breath; otherwise the work will suffer with excess energy or not enough.

During a new work process I like to have the option of choosing from all the techniques that I have gathered. It is all connected with breath and its relationship to movement. I go back to a quotation from Destro, " Love is the only constant everything else is movement", because in order to fill the forms one must love the character and the work must fill it. This takes me back to a fundamental note, Dr. Cameron gave, Dr. Cameron states that an actor must support the character. This ties into what Destro and Kalina have discussed in reference to mask characters. In order to give the mask what it requires, it needs the actor not judge their character but support it. The strongest form of support is love.

The point is to breathe life into characters, knowing that the character is an opportunity to shed light on parts of me that are necessary to support it. Sometimes the sheer thought of love and surrender is all I need to help me reach the state of play that creates joy in my work. The love must be for the giving over to mask and clown. Kalina has said, you must give the mask everything and not hold back, not only in the mid to max, but in the motors. Dr. Cameron states, you must come in full in your preparations.

Destro and Coletto said you must fill the space. Another quote I have from Destro is “Spread you in the space.” Everything in this work is tied together tangibly with breath and movement.

For the character *Coco* in *A Pocket Full of Sand*, the spine of the character needed to be weighed down my time and guilt. Coco was older, so his movement was different from my movement. I used the information given through direction and the script to find whatever I could that would fit this characters stance, his gate and his demeanor. After two weeks of toying with ideas and physicality’s I began to stick to the basic structure of one in particular and sit in it longer; I began to explore this form and relationship to space gravity, and the prospect of pain being an issue for his movements. Listening to the vibration is a sensitivity that I work to hone in on, because listening with the body is my way of navigating this characters’ journey through space and time during the rehearsals. The sensitivity to vibrations give me something to feel and respond to, it give me something to play. Its important to remember that acting is reacting and that a sensitive body is the primed instrument to do this. As this interaction between my characters body and the environment is happening in all I’m doing, as the actor, is gathering information and options. Sometimes options from previous rehearsals will connect and new choices will arise out of interactions thus hopefully creating new clearer moments. My process is about creating a new energy field, a circuit and identifying the nuances of its response.

The actor must always be present so that artistic choices are made. There is a key that Kalina explained to us in our third year that is also discussed by Destro and Coletto, it is that the actor must support the neutral state which then must fill the mask, almost like

a stream of light that is changed in procession to becoming concentrations of brilliant colors that are character.

During the Partnership of the Arts project, Paul Kalina brought two amazing people to the university. The individuals were Paula Coletto and Matteo Destro. Coletto and Destro were working in collaboration with Paul over the years and began focusing their energy on a piece. During the visits they made here they lead mask workshops. I had never witnessed this form of play, this technique of physical theatre, which called upon the actor holistically. The work required more breath and more listening, which are not my strengths, though they are the focus of my work now. With them I was able to connect concepts of risk and play from previous courses with Kalina and found myself more engaged with parts of myself that I was having trouble expressing throughout my time here. The mask calls upon more energy and awareness than I could have ever imagined and it uses it relentlessly. The form is beautiful and physically demanding, but this should be the case for all my work. It will demand and I must fulfill its' challenge.

Paola told us that the work in the mask was not specifically designated for actors wearing masks. Paola helped me understand that text of a character is a mask. The tied together everything in voice to what was happening physically in my work, the relationship was synonymous as movement was the catalyst that has inspired my work. Character is mask, a simple concept that I didn't experience until I spent time working in mask and doing what I could to support it. This is apart of my process now, because I don't have a mask for all my characters, but I have the text and the text in line with my actions is the character. Again, what is essential is the process by which the actor

supports the neutral state, meaning the presence of everything, the state filling the physical form of the character, and the physical form supporting the text. It requires a lot of building and excavating and rebuilding in order to find where the character lives, but there are so many tools. The obstacle of the characters emergence is too much theorizing instead of playing with simple choices. I tend to try to make things happen intellectually and not breathe, simply breathing and listening does so much for my work, because it takes me out of my head, think less feel more.

Section 4: Voice is movement

My way into the work is focused on the movement, because everything is movement. Everything that is active is moving in response to something else. Sound is movement and the goal of my work is to become more vibrational so that amplification is stronger. This makes the most sense to me, from tremors to increasing presence; it all comes back to the vibrations and frequency. If more of the body is vibration then more of the body is active. When I first got here my body was very rigid and dense with tension so the waves and vibration did not resonate with high frequency. I believe there has been a development of openness and expansion within the tissue and structural compositions of fascia and tissue within the body. It was always about release and the future holds only the question “what else can be released?”

The body is my instrument that produces sound. How do I continue the process of improving the strength along with the elasticity of my vocal sound production? Duration, pitch, tone, range, and depth are all qualities of the physical force that manifests from energy and intention to sound. I have gained realization that sound is physical and requires the breath to release the tissues of my body to produce the appropriate sound in combination with intention. This happens unconsciously in my daily interactions, but the process now is about expanding my awareness of sound. The power of sound the specificity of sound the quality of sound is now more considered in my process. At this point of my process the only way in is through breath and movement. I believe everything that I have gained here is all connected to movement and vibrations. Sound waves are vibrations; I ask myself how can I produce vibrations that are specific to my

imagination and my intention. How can I produce sound that has the physical momentum of a physical gesture, but only with my voice?

This question is indicative that I am barely tapping into the power of sound. Ann-Marie Nest discusses free open sound and the support coming from the breath that is inspired throughout the entire body not just certain body cavities, the power of sound comes from the deepest parts of the body. The power comes from the use of breath within the entire body. When Nest speaks about this I imagine all caverns of the body saturated with breath through every crevice or space tapping all the tissue as it prepares for exhalation. This is more conscious consideration than I had in the past. I feel as though my journey with sound is complimented by the understanding of movement, though this is all just the beginning.

Up until recently most of my inhalation was labored and force in pursuance of desperation to release the body's tension. My efforts were associated with manipulation rather than allowance. It never dawned on me that a more positive approach of giving over to the possibility that the work does not need to be muscled but allowed. I need to allow myself to release instead of force myself to release.

There is a possibility that I am reaching a place where the breath is not labored or being forced into more spaces within my body, but the key is that I allow it to enter, and if there is pain I allow more breath to release the pain the tension in combination with sound.

Expanding with breath will help the production of sound, this is an imagination tool that I like to use to help me breathe more. If I believe I am expanding then I can

reach everyone on stage and everyone in the audience, I can be connected to the space. This being present is the first part of what will lead me to connect to everyone and everything around me with my sound, with my vibrations. Expanding is about filling more of myself with the life force that is breath. It's simple to discuss, but for a long time I didn't believe it to be true, I thought it was a theoretical concept, but throughout my time here in practice I have become a believer of expansion and presence with body and sound.

The goal in my work is to continue to release and have the ability to consciously do so until I reach a point of unconscious competence. The constant exploration of what can still be released and listening to the vibrations around will develop the sensitivity needed to craft sounds for my characters. Sound is movement, and movement is constant. I must continue to listen to the vibrations of my environment and the world. Dr. Cameron has said in the past "there is a rhythm to life all you have to do is listen." Kalina says let the body listen, Fannie Hungerford says think less feel more, and Nest encourages release of the body tissue with tremors all of which are interconnected to vibrations.

All of these things are valid in the continuance of my work, and will never reach a point of conclusion. If anything the awareness in itself is invaluable.

Section 5: What is a good actor? Where am I?

An athlete, an artist, a chef, a specialist, a technician, a carpenter, a builder, a painter, a slave, a career man, a career woman, a monster, a child, a dog, a fly, a machine, a representation of ideas from the imagination that live in a form that responds to the world around them. A player, a leader, a supporter, a follower, a sound, a movement, a gesture, a combination of dance and song, a comedy a tragedy an action of resulting actions, a bilingual magician, a perverse creep, a princess, an addict, an idiot and everything that has not been stated.

I do not know, I have beliefs and my beliefs will change. My tastes will change and so will the world. I believe an actor that is good is a person that can do anything, one that can tap into any part of themselves with immediacy and full connection to what they mean to communicate as per intention either in movement or sound. I believe a good actor can trick me in to doing anything, into believing anything, and not question but be seduced by their actions.

I believe a good actor can navigate any landscape and play within it with adversity and power. I don't want to know what is coming next, and I believe a good actor can make this happen. I believe a good actor is a master of the senses, the body, the mind, the emotions and the soul.

Good actors can deal with themselves and not allow their issues to imprint a character that they seek to develop, but how will I ever know if what I am seeing is truly

engineered with precision and extensive work? I will not and this is ok as well. I feel as though the only reason this question is relevant so that I can elevate myself in this lifetime to the unattainable ideal.

A good actor is never satisfied, and this is what has been stated numerous times here. I believe it to be true; in order to attain greatness one must continually pursue it humbly but relentlessly. A good actor uses everything that is in front of them and endows it with relevance to what they are seeking.

The one who can slow time and make the audience follow the most specific nuance with complete attention, the one who can captivate a dog. That is the one who is on the path to becoming a good actor. The use of everything, the good actor uses everything, they play all the notes, they use their fear and they surrender to everything to the character. They sacrifice more than the rest.

I do not know where I am relation to this idea of a good actor. My mind, my body and my soul are beginning to stir but I do not know. I have will and determination, but I don't know. I have hate, rage, sorrow, joy and love for this journey but I do not know where I am or where I am going. I used to make plans for my life over the last decade and now for the first time in a long time I do not know where I am going. I have insight and an education of a craft, I have goals for my craft and have confidence that I may continue the process of growth, but I believe this is only the beginning of a journey that will not end till my demise.

I can see more and listen more to the world without assuming that there is a reason, but accepting that things just happen. I have an easier time letting go while expressing things rather than holding onto things and gaining the energetic weight of negativity of things that I do not want to hold on to. I do not identify, as an actor acting is a profession. I am trying to find peace as a person, who so happens to enjoy acting. I can sit in stillness for longer periods of time, yet I still criticize this minuscule feat. This is fine, I am allowed this so that I can accept it a move forward.

Acceptance and surrender are things that I have become more familiar with during my time here, though I do not know if this is going to be what guides me to the next chapter of my life. It seems that the simpler and specific I can get about my life the more appreciation I can have for it. There is beauty in world; it is my opportunity to see it.

Performance Bibliography:

Crescendo

By Matteo Destro, Paola Coletto

University of Iowa Mainstage
Director/Collaborator – Matteo Destro and Paolo Coletto
Collaborators – Paul Kalina, David Bills
Stage Manager – Alison Kochman
Assistant Stage Manager – Kelsey Petersen
Assistant Stage Manager – Lauren Watt
Music Director – John Rapson
Vocal Director – Anne Marie Nest
Scenic Designer – Kevin Dudley
Dramaturg – Madison Colquette
Costume Designer – Jae Hee Kim
Assistant Costume Designer – Desiree Smith
Lighting Designer – Bryon Winn
Assistant Lighting Designer – Joshua Hinden
Sound Designer – Andrew Stewart

Cast – Valeria Avina, Felipe Carrasco, Ari Craven, Aneisa Hicks, Paul Kalina, Alay Arcelus Macazaga, Allyson Jean Malandra, Bre Anna McNeill, Chris Rangel, Damitri Taylor, Rubina Vidal

Location – David Thayer Theatre
Dates – October 9, 2014 to October 19, 2014
Role – Emilio (Principal Role)

Speed of Light

By Bella Poynton

University of Iowa New Play Festival
Director – Ariel Francoeur
Dramaturgy - Madison Colquette
Scenic Design – Peggy Mead – Finizio
Costume Designer – Emily Busha
Lighting Designer – Matt Carney
Sound Design – Bri Atwood
Stage Designer – Joe Pray
Assistant Stage Manager – Dony Kim

Cast – Elizabeth Hinkler, Nate Wasson, Chris Rangel , Ali Borchers, Frankie Rose III, Rj Mcghee and Melina Neves

Location – David Thayer Theatre
Date – May 9, 2014
Role – Tazmen Zandt

Pocketful of Sand
By Emily Dendinger

University of Iowa Gallery
Director – Aaron Weiner
Assistant Director - Annie Levitz
Dramaturgy - Sarah Johnson
Stage Manager - Kelsey Peterson
Scenic Designer - Josh Christofferson
Sound Designer - Bri Atwood
Lighting Designer - Cassie Malmquist
Costume Designer - Angie Esposito

Cast - Christopher Rangel, Elizabeth Hinkler, and Adam Philips

Location - Theatre B
Dates -Feb 20, 2014 to Feb 23, 2014
Role – Coco (Primary Role)

The Playwright
By Mario El Caponi Mendoza

University of Iowa (Gallery)
Director – Mario El Caponi Mendoza
Lighting Designer – Kevin Dudley
Scenic Designer – Lucas Ingram
Costume Designer – Jae Hee Kim and Angie Esposito

Cast – Connett Croghan, Kaleb Mains, Chris Rangel, Ashely Sorenson and RJ Mcghee

Location – Theatre B
Dates – December 12 – 14 2013
Role - Ensemble

Water by the Spoonful
By Quiara Alegría Hudes

University of Iowa Mainstage
Director – Tlaloc Rivas
Assistant Director – Maritza Pineda
Stage Manager – Melissa L. F. Turner
Assistant Stage Manager – Rachel E. Winfield
Scenic Designer – Taesup Lee
Costume Designer – Jess Fialko
Assistant Costume Designer – Emms Zhang
Lighting/Video Designer – Peggy Mead-Finizio
Assistant Lighting Designer – Lucas Ingram
Sound Designer – Bri Atwood
Dialect Coach – Careena Melia

Cast – Christopher Rangel (Elliot Ortiz), Valeria Avina (Yazmin Ortiz), Regina Morones (Haikumom, a.k.a. Odessa Ortiz), Kevin Argus (Fountainhead, a.k.a. John), Kristin Ho (Orangutan, a.k.a. Madeleine Mays), Jordan Corpman (Ghost/Professor Aman/Policeman)

Location – David Thayer Theatre
Dates - Oct 10, 2013 to Oct 20, 2013
Role – Elliot Ortiz (Leading Role)

For The Falls
By Emily Dendinger

University of Iowa New Play Festival
Director – Tlaloc Rivas
Scenic Designer – Kevin Loeffler
Costume Designer – Megan Rowley
Lighting Designer – Peggy Mead – Finizio
Sound Designer – Hiram Orozco
Stage Manager – Kristine Moffit

Cast – Beth Kilmer, Jesse Traufler, Thomas Eslinger, Chris Rangel, Kate Chindlund and Andrew Berger

Location – David Thayer Theatre

Date – May 5, 2013
Role – Andrew (Secondary Role)

Book Wings

The Dead Parent Club

By Carlos Murillo

The Dream House

By Sherry Kramer

University of Iowa Special Projects
Directors –Eric Forsythe / Saffron Heinke
Production Stage Manager – Rebecca Tritten
Stage Manager – Leigh’ Ann Andrews
Stage Manager – Amber Lewandowski
Stage Manager – LeeAnn Yeckley
Videoconferencing and Livestream Project Lead – Les Finken
Projection Engineer – Brent Garrett
Livestream Management – Lauren Haldeman
University of Iowa Television – Ben Hill, Producer
Production Designer – Bryon Winn
Lighting Designer – Peggy Mead-Finizio
Sound Designer/Sound Engineer – Andrew Nelsen
Sound Designer – Bri Atwood
Video Designer – Matt Benyo
Costume Designer – Sarah Pipho
Properties Manager – Josh Christoffersen
Supertitle Operator – Oleg Timofeyev
Supertitle Slide Preparer – Addie Leak

Cast – Christopher Rangel (Colleague); Christopher Rangel (The Skunk), Ari Craven (Jerry), Krista Neumann (Mandy)

Location – Theatre B

Dates – March 14, 2013

Role – Colleague, Principal Role; The Skunk, Principle Role

Champagne Gods

By Emily Dendinger

University of Iowa Gallery

Director - Kristin Clippard

Set Designer – Adam Phillips

Lighting Designer - NA

Stage Manager - NA

Cast – Bella Poynton, Chris Rangel, Mark Smolyar, Aaron Weiner, Suzy Culbertson and Keyla McClure

Location -Theatre B

Dates - Dec 06, 2012 to Dec 08, 2012

Role - Will (Primary Role)

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<http://www.vasta.org/internet-resources-1#members>